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DE RUEHLP #0409/01 0751559
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161559Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0307
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8879
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6254
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0228
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7438
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4485
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0416
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4818
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6186
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7100
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1868
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1706
RHEHN/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000409

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM PHUM PINR ENVR ASEC BL

SUBJECT: GOB RHETORIC MAY SET STAGE FOR FURTHER EXPULSIONS

REF: A. LA PAZ 407

1B. LA PAZ 373

1C. LA PAZ 305

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: Following the March 9 expulsion of Embassy officer Frank Martinez (Reftels B, C) and subsequent government accusations March 12 of more CIA activity in the country (Reftel A), President Evo Morales charged March 13 and 14 that "foreign agents" were "buying the loyalty" of Bolivian security forces and that "there is an army official who has direct contact with the CIA," respectively. The next day, Government Minister Alfredo Rada made a separate accusation that the police guarding the Embassy were "truly working as officers of the U.S. Embassy" and implied they were supplying intelligence to the CIA. Post fears the GOB may be setting the stage for further expulsions of Embassy personnel. The GOB appears to believe it can take such actions with little concern for reciprocal action by us. End summary.

Morales Cites Presence of "Foreign Agents"

12. (U) During a March 13 press conference, President Evo Morales charged that there were "foreign agents" present in Bolivia who were "buying the loyalty" of members of both the army and the Bolivian National Police. The next day, during a visit to the Circle of Army Officers (COE), Morales said he had knowledge of a "specific" Bolivian army officer passing information to the CIA. Morales did not name the officer, but said he "had personally decided to investigate" the case and that he had not yet discussed the matter with the military high command. Government press statements recalled supposed CIA involvement in the government oil company YPFB and the expulsion of Frank Martinez before quoting Morales as saying "to sell information to external agents would be a great betrayal of the homeland."

Rada Implies Embassy Guards Linked to CIA

¶3. (C) Government Minister Alfredo Rada on March 15, after denouncing that a reporter for government daily Cambio was held by Embassy guards for two hours for taking photos of the Embassy's facade, raised the spectre of the guards' potential involvement with the CIA. Rada initially protested simply that the reporter was inappropriately held for two hours, but then held a separate press conference to announce his suspicions that some of the Embassy guards were "working as true officers of the U.S. Embassy" and supplying intelligence information. (Note: The reporter was neither detained nor brought inside the Embassy. He cooperated willingly when asked for his identification, and left after ten to fifteen minutes of conversation. End note.) Rada noted that some five guards, who are members of the Bolivian National Police force, had worked at the Embassy for "10 or 11 years" and said "the party was over." He promised these guards would be rotated to other positions, which would effectively test their loyalty and that "if they do not report for duty, they will be taken as deserters." He also stated he had a list of which police had received payment from the U.S., which he promised to make public. Rada did not name any guard specifically, nor did he discuss specific instances of passing intelligence, but state press agency ABI and state radio reported Rada's concern that the guards were working with the CIA.

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Comment
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¶4. (C) Post is concerned Morales and his advisors are laying the groundwork for potential further expulsions, perhaps as early as this week. With each accusation of CIA involvement in Bolivian internal affairs, the Bolivian government does further damage to our bilateral relationship. The Bolivians do not seem to understand there is any downside to using us as a domestic political tool or that such expulsions (or threats of the same) make improved relations with the White House more difficult. State media this weekend linked the latest accusations not only to the expulsion of Frank Martinez and supposed CIA involvement in YPFB, but with the February 2008 departure of security officer Vincent Cooper and the September 2008 expulsion of Ambassador Goldberg. Post fears the GOB may be setting the stage for further expulsions of Embassy personnel. The GOB appears to believe it can take such actions with impunity. End comment.

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